

Baltic Science Network

BSN Position paper

Tackling widening participation in R&I from the Baltic Sea Region perspective

About this position paper

The **Baltic Science Network (BSN)**¹ is a macro-regional forum for higher education, science and research cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) and involves organisations and institutions from around the Baltic Sea drainage area. BSN assembles national science ministries as well as national, Nordic and EU research funding organisations. University networks (Baltic University Programme and Baltic Sea Region University Network) and individual universities represent researchers in BSN. A Russian university (Saint Petersburg State University of Economics) and the key multilateral fora of the BSR (Council of the Baltic Sea States and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region) are involved. The BSR can be considered a test-bed for developing and implementing innovative measures for exploiting the macro-region's full research and innovation potential. A third of the EU's leading innovation areas are located around the Baltic Sea. This paper is looking at EU-wide trends, taking stock of the results of BSN and the BSR.

Openness is a strategic priority in the European Research and Innovation (R&I) policy, but not sufficient to secure the development of high-level R&I in all parts of Europe. Additional R&I investments from European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) for transnational research projects, dedicated measures from the Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development and Innovation (FP), the 'Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation' programme (SEWP) in Horizon 2020 have been implemented and efforts made by the EU Member States to increase the competitiveness of Europe. However, there is a concentration of funds to the 'Old' Member States (EU-15) and the participation of most of the 'New' Member States (EU-13) in FP falls short of that of the EU-15².

Recommendations

In light of the recently published proposal on establishing the specific programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation by the European Commission, BSN recognizes the still existing participation gap in the EU.

¹ More information about the Baltic Science Network can be found on the website www.baltic-science.org

² [Study on Research Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region: Existing Networks, Obstacles and Ways Forward](#), 2017, Visionary analytics.

Challenges in building a globally competitive European Research Area (ERA), such as the participation gap and the innovation divide must be continuously addressed by various measures and initiatives, both at national, macro–regional and EU level, including Cohesion Policy instruments. **BSN draws attention to the following recommendations from a macro–regional research perspective, relevant in relation to widening participation, especially in view of the proposals for Horizon Europe.**

To be addressed at EU, macro–regional and national levels:

- 1. Strengthen the effectiveness of Research, Development and Innovation systems and increase investment into R&I.** The role of science and technology should be central in solving global problems.
- 2. Continue enforcing simplification measures, improve openness and accessibility of research programmes and infrastructures.** Support the creation of networks and mobility programmes. Streamline rules in funding programmes for the benefit of researchers, especially in their early career stages. Decrease the level of overall administration.

At EU level:

- 3. Continue dedicated measures in the Horizon Europe to address the participation gap.** Maintain excellence as the main criterion. Ensure that the specific measures supporting Widening Participation will not substitute participating in FP nor isolate the countries lagging behind.
- 4. Improve FP synergies with ESIF** by harmonizing the rules of participation for ESIF and FP9 where relevant. Ensure that FP measures, such as Twinning, ERA Chair Actions and EU R&I partnerships can be effectively combined with ESIF funding.
- 5. Increase the use of transnational instruments such as INTERREG for joint macro–regional R&I.** In the next programming period INTERREG could provide research funding for regional collaboration and increase the funding of transnational networks and programmes, such as mobility programmes.
- 6. Consider revising the principles of calculating indirect costs for INTERREG–funded projects.** As salary levels in different countries vary, a calculation method based on personnel costs would decrease the budgets of less–earning institutions in cooperation projects even further.
- 7. Take into account the needs of smaller countries when designing and implementing Horizon Europe.** Geographically smaller countries with a smaller population may favour small–scale projects and may require a case–to–case evaluation process.

- 8. Continue supporting international and cross–sectorial mobility and networking by actively engaging a broader set of relevant actors.** Support organising thematic conferences and summer schools, short– and long–term fellowships of early career and established researchers. Special attention should be turned to the participation of early career stage researchers in collaboration activities.

At macro–regional and national level:

- 9. Test new initiatives at the macro–regional level to amplify the effect of FP funding** in areas of strategic importance – for example, find innovative ways to support high–ranked but unfunded European Research Council cooperation project proposals including lower performing regions.
- 10. Expand cross–border cooperation in the BSR on a macro–regional level** following the examples of the BONUS programme and INTERREG BSR projects. These programmes should be continued and used as examples for cooperation in other R&I fields.
- 11. Support targeted information activities and experience sharing** at all levels, including the macro–regional level, to overcome the R&I divide in FP.
- 12. Showcase or brand the uniqueness of BSR and its research institutions and infrastructures** to increase their attractiveness as a partner. For example, life sciences, welfare state and photon–neutron research can be considered a priority field for many institutions of the BSR.
- 13. Support application writing** on a macro–regional or European level by joint support platforms and communication of good practices to facilitate cooperation and widening participation.
- 14. Focus on cooperation in fields of common interest.** The strategic research and innovation agendas need better coordination. Joint missions³ need to be developed for solving common challenges.

Disclaimer

This document is based on current reflections among partners and stakeholders and findings of BSN working papers and studies⁴ on research cooperation, researchers' mobility and widening participation in the BSR. The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily correspond to, nor compete with, national positions or positions of organisations.

³ The definition of missions is regarded as in „Mission-Oriented Research & Innovation in the European Union - A problem-solving approach to fuel innovation-led growth” by Mariana Mazzucato, European Commission, 2018.

⁴ More information about the Baltic Science Network can be found on the website www.baltic-science.org

Annex

Members of the Baltic Science Network

Denmark



Danish Agency for Science and Higher Education,
Ministry of Higher Education and Science

Estonia



Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia

Finland



University of Turku



Åbo Akademi University

Germany



Ministry of Science, Research and Equalities, Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg



Ministry of Education, Science and Cultural Affairs, Land of Schleswig-Holstein



German Academic Exchange Service

Latvia



Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia

Lithuania



Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania



Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre MOSTA

Poland



University of Gdansk

Sweden



Swedish Research Council

International



Council of the Baltic Sea
States Secretariat

Associate organisations of the Baltic Science Network

Germany



Ministry of Education,
Science and Culture, Land
of Mecklenburg-
Vorpommern

Poland



Ministry of Science and
Higher Education of the
Republic of Poland

Russia



St. Petersburg State
University of Economics

International



Baltic Organisations'
Network for Funding
Science EEIG (BONUS)



Baltic Sea Region University
Network (BSRUN)



Baltic University
Programme



NordForsk NordForsk



EU Strategy for the Baltic
Sea Region – Policy Area
Education